

Words Matter



Grayken Center for Addiction
Training & Technical Assistance
Boston Medical Center

Terms to use and avoid when talking about addiction

SAY THIS

- Person with a substance use disorder
- Person with addiction
- Person who uses drugs
- Person who misuses alcohol
- Person engages in unhealthy alcohol use
- Person's name

For Alcohol

- Risky or unhealthy alcohol use

For Prescription Medications

- Misuse, used other than prescribed

For Illicit Drugs

- Use

- Medication for addiction treatment (MAT)
- Medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD)
- Opioid agonist therapy (OAT)
- Medication for a substance use disorder
- Treatment

For Toxicology Results

- Positive test or unexpected result

Non-test Related

- Person who uses drugs

For Toxicology Non-test Related

- Person in remission or recovery

- Baby born with Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal or Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
- Newborn exposed to substances

NOT THIS

Addict, User, Drug Abuser, Junkie,
Crackhead, Tweaker, Pill-popper
Alcoholic, Drunk

Abuse

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)
Replacement Therapy
Substitution Therapy

Dirty

Clean

Addicted baby, Crack baby